

REMARKS

In the last Office Action, claims 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12, 13, 16-23, 33 and 34 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Houlihan (U.S. Patent No. 5,260,915) in view of Brown (U.S. Patent No. 5,386,215). Claims 2, 4, 6 and 10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103 as being unpatentable over Houlihan in view of Brown and further in view of Liebendoerfer (U.S. Patent No. 5,943,020). Claims 24-32 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim and were otherwise indicated to be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

In accordance with this response, applicants have elected to accept the allowable subject matter in order to expedite issuance of their patent. To this end, independent claim 21 has been amended to incorporate the subject matter of allowable dependent claim 24 together with intervening claim 22, thereby placing claim 21 in allowable form. Claims 22 and 24 have, therefore, been canceled along with rejected claims 1-7, 9-10, 12-13 and 16-20.

Dependent claim 23 has been amended to depend on base claim 21 rather than non-canceled claim 22. Similarly, dependent claim 25 has been amended to depend on base claim 21 rather than now-canceled claim 24.

As result of the foregoing amendments, claims 21, 23 and 25-34 remain pending in the application. Independent claim 21 incorporates the subject matter of allowable dependent claim 24 together with intervening claim 22 thereby placing claim 21 in allowable form. Claims 23 and 25-34 all depend, either directly or indirectly, on allowable base claim 21 and thus these claims are likewise allowable.

In the preliminary amendment filed by mailing certificate dated December 19, 2002, Fig. 3 was amended to change reference numeral 14 to 11 to conform the drawings to the written description. In the last Office Action, the Examiner accepted the proposed drawing correction, and a replacement sheet of formal drawing is submitted herewith to make this drawing correction.

As all informalities, objections and rejections have been overcome, the application is now believed to be in allowable form.

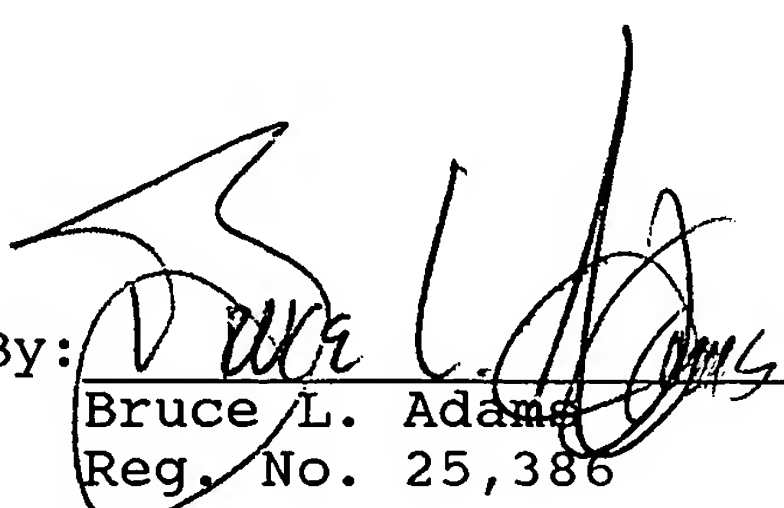


Accordingly, favorable reconsideration and passage of the application to issue are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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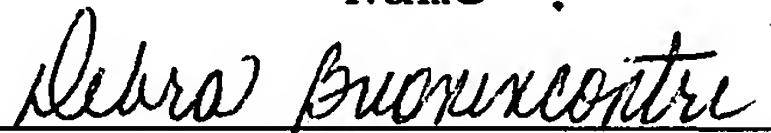
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July 7, 2004

Date